



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF
CONCORD (NH)



2022
2023

UU CHURCH OF CONCORD YEARBOOK

www.concorduu.org



UU CHURCH
OF CONCORD



WELCOME TO OUR 2022-23 YEARBOOK

As the world began recovering from the global COVID-19 pandemic, we had the unique opportunity to find new ways to live out our church mission.

Connecting in Love and Service

We reconnected with dynamic multiplatform worship and innovative family programs, while bringing back many tried-and-true traditions like our beloved picnics.

Growing Spiritually

We broadened our worship experience with dozens of pulpit guests while our Senior Minister was on sabbatical, developed our identity as UUs through Second Hour Learning, Service & Practice, and practiced meditation and mindfulness through a variety of platforms.

Transforming Ourselves and our World

We reinvigorated and reimagined our outreach programs such as UU Friends of Refugees, gave tens of thousands of dollars away through our Community Plate, and made a record commitment to our UU faith through our UUA Annual Program Fund contribution.

This Yearbook is dedicated to these special volunteers honored in June 2023:

Karen Mayo,
Volunteer of the Year

Ann Hoey,
Unsung Hero

Peggy & Tom Herbert,
Lifetime Volunteers

OUR VISION

Our church acts under a system of policy governance and has adopted the following Ends as the goals we wish to accomplish.

Our congregants create and experience authentic connection.

Congregants give and receive care and support in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.

We have a broad circle of effective leaders who have the resources to complete their work in service to our mission.

Our congregation benefits from the exchange of wisdom across diverse life stages and experiences.

Our rich and diverse worship and religious life nurtures, challenges and inspires us to daily practice of our values, lifelong learning, and transformation.

We are grounded in our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition and pass those values to the next generation.

We are visible leaders in the greater Concord area as we live our Unitarian Universalist values.

Our outreach ministries have a noticeable impact in the larger community.

We are full and active participants in the work of both the Greater Concord Faith Community and the larger Unitarian Universalist community

We work to recognize, understand, and dismantle systems of bias, oppression, and privilege within ourselves, our congregation, our community, and the larger world.



We asked our church leaders to reflect on how we achieved these ends in 2022-23, and their answers created this Yearbook. We thank them for their thoughtful contributions.



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Our congregants create and experience authentic connection.



2022-23 Staff

Submitted by Lea Smith

Our Staff Team is fun, creative, and hard-working as they bring congregants together for worship, faith development, social activities, and sometimes even dancing! From August 2022 through February 2023, Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger was on sabbatical. During this period, Rev. Lyn Marshall and Lea Smith were Acting Co-executives, dividing Michael's responsibilities. Two Intern Ministers, Daniel Frye and Jeff Beland, enriched our worship services and programs. Our beloved Office Administrator, Heidi Page, resigned in March, and we were delighted to hire Becky Bosse as our compassionate and competent new Office Administrator. With sadness, we accepted the resignation of Choir Director Alex Hunton at the end of the church year.

Staff members included:

Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger, Senior Minister

Rev. Lyn Marshall, Minister of Lifespan Faith Development

Jeff Beland and Daniel Frye, Intern Ministers

Lea Smith, Director of Membership & Administration

Heidi Page/Becky Bosse, Office Administrator

Robert Baker, Director of Facilities & Technology

Calvin Herst, Accompanist

Alex Hunton, Choir Director

Agnes Sesay, Custodian

Alex Rubinstein, Audiovisual Assistant

Patrick Yehle and Maria Ruelas, Childcare Providers

Concord UU Social Time

Submitted by Renee West

Concord UU's Social Time, held the first, fourth, and fifth Sundays during the official church year and every Sunday during the summer months, is a wonderful opportunity for attendees to connect with friends and get acquainted with visitors to our church. Warming up with coffee or cooling down with lemonade, Social Time provides a space to bolster our beloved community, strengthening the bonds that sustain our church and those within it. Many heartfelt thanks to the nearly 30 individuals who hosted during this year, either after service or during special events.



Family Potluck Picnics

Submitted by Renee West

Our fall and spring Family Potluck Picnics were such fun events! We were blessed with good weather on both occasions, and our Spring 2023 picnic attracted so many people, the line seemed never-ending! The spring picnic saw the return of pre-COVID attendance with well over 100 people present. There was an impressive supply of delicious sides and desserts brought by our congregants, as well as the delicious items grilled by Bob Lyon (fall) and Sarah Keniston (spring) with Warren Haslam assisting at both. These events take quite a bit of work, and approximately 30 people signed up to help, with others pitching in on the day of. These events are wonderful opportunities to share fellowship at the end of one church year and to gather again for the start of a new one.



Grounds Team

Submitted by Fran Philippe, co-leader

The Grounds Team has the huge responsibility for maintaining the entire church property as a beautiful, safe place for creating community. One of the major projects this year was having eight trees removed after some of them were affected by a strong wind storm in December. From the four proposals received, Accurate Tree Service was awarded and completed the first phase of the contract. Seasonal all-church clean ups were held in the fall and spring, with Green Team work days held monthly in the summer. Some of the more major work that was completed includes hedge and brush trimming, bittersweet control, and weed control and mulching. The flower beds are tended by adopt-a-spotters.

A huge thank you to ALL of the volunteers who have really made a difference!

Welcome Back Michael Celebration!

On March 3, 2023, we welcomed back senior minister Michael Leuchtenberger from his sabbatical with a potluck supper, chocolate, games, & dancing!





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Our congregants create and experience authentic connection.

Long-term Member Recognition Breakfast

Submitted by Janet Kelley-Vail, Coordinator

We celebrate and acknowledge the contributions our long-term members have made, and continue to make, to our community. Our long-term members carry our history as a community, connect us to our past, and provide wisdom and deep experience as we grow and move forward. At our annual Long-term Member Recognition Breakfast, folks check in with each other, stories are shared and everyone is so appreciative of this joyous event.



Choir

Choir members were joyful to sing together, unmasked, after the long pandemic shutdown and mask requirements, and the congregation was grateful to hear them! Choir Director Alex Hunton led hybrid choir rehearsals so those who still weren't comfortable joining in person could participate. Unfortunately, in mid-December 2022, more than half the choir present at a rehearsal came down with COVID, including Rev. Lyn Marshall. This did not stop Christmas from coming, and the choir sang carols on Christmas Eve for the first time since 2019.

Alex Hunton led a music-filled service on June 4, 2023, entitled "Sing Out, My Soul," looking at the positive effects singing can have on our bodies and souls. At the end of the church year, we were sorry to see Alex leave after two years as our Choir Director. At the same time we were very happy for him in his new teaching position!

Music Committee

Submitted by Jack and Vicki Wakelin,
Committee members

The Music Committee (Jack and Vicki Wakelin, with ad hoc members Gary Schroeder, and Craig Whitson and others) supported the music program by:

- Providing support to music staff during rehearsals and Sunday morning services;
- Orienting new choir members and people who were interested in joining the choir;
- Supplying new choir folders to replace worn folders as needed; and
- Managing the music inventory.

Contemplative Practices Group

Submitted by Betsy Black, Facilitator

The Contemplative Practices Group, led by many generous and experienced lay leaders, provides varied opportunities for UUs (and friends) to support each other through spiritual practice in community. About these often solitary practices, in her book *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, Kathleen Norris aptly describes: "[that]...the paradox of the contemplative life, that desert of solitude... [is] where we learn to love others."

Our offerings:

- The Daily Sit - on-line every day! (rotating lay-led)
- Exploring Mindfulness and Community: 6-week course of study and practice (Jeanne Ann Whittington and others)
- Jack Kornfield's Buddhism for Beginners: Second Hour year-long study and practice (Marjorie Moulton and others)
- Monday Mindfulness Practice Group: study, meditation and yoga (rotating lay-led);
- Insight Meditation: monthly meditation and teaching (transitioning to a new format) (Rae Houseman)
- Contemplative Knitting: NEW in 2022-2023 - monthly (Rev. Lyn Marshall),
- Taize Services: a monthly evening worship service featuring an hour of meditative singing, a brief reading, a period of extended silence, and candle lights
- Monthly Retreats: The Practice of Non-Doing: Remembering Emptiness and Insight Meditation Annual Retreat (Rae Houseman)
- Annual New Year's Silent Self-Guided Retreat
- 9th Annual Mindfulness Meditation Weekend Retreat (Jeanne Ann Whittington and Betsy Black)

Participating in the Insight Meditation Sangha (when it was meeting) and the on-going Monday Mindfulness group (10 years now!), has helped me keep my sitting practice going by offering sustaining inspiration and nurturing social connection.

-- Kim Gillis, longtime CPG leader and participant



Digital Connections

Submitted by Lea Smith and Robert Baker

The improvement of audiovisual and technological resources has expanded our ability to reach a wider congregation outside our walls, and to better connect with those who attend in-person. In his first complete church year as Director of Facilities and Technology, Robert Baker made these Improvements, and many more:

- Installed a new soundboard (X32Compact) and programmed sound-mixing methods, to improve sound in the Sanctuary, for the hearing assisted devices, and for the livestream.
- Changed internet service provider to Fidium fiber for higher speeds and lower cost
- Rewired Minister's Study for new equipment, creating a more welcoming and efficient space to gather online and in person.
- Replaced office main router.
- Replaced security camera video recorder.



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care and
support in times
of joy, sorrow,
and transition.**

Celebrating our New Members

Submitted by Lea Smith,
Director of Membership & Administration

Becoming a member of the church means moving from being an observer or participant to being actively committed to our church's mission to connect in love and service. Ten new members joined the church after participating in our Exploring Membership group which was offered twice this year. Meetings were run by Lorraine Ellis, along with Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger, Rev. Lyn Marshall, Intern Ministers Jeff Beland and Dan Frye, and Director of Membership & Administration Lea Smith.

Welcome to Gretchen Brown, Susan Casey, Jim Curley, Han Hamel, Pam Mosca, Ashley Young, Cynthia Davis, Arthoen Wolf, Bob Holleman, and Alli Wheelock. We also welcomed back former members Steven and Edie Daigle.



Rainbow Room Nursery

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

If you are an infant, toddler, or preschooler, a morning at church almost always involves joy, sorrow, and for sure, transition. We were fortunate to have a dream team of Patrick Yehle, a student at UNH Law School, and youth group member Maria Ruelas helping maximize joy and a feeling of safety and care for our youngest congregants while their guardians attended worship services and after-church programs.



Caring Network Meals

Submitted by Renee West, Meals Coordinator

When congregants experience a medical issue, are grieving a loss, or having trouble so that making meals is a difficulty, our church offers a service whereby congregants make and bring delicious dishes to those in need. During the 2022-23 year, many individuals brought meals or shopped for those in need. This program makes recipients feel truly comforted and cared for during trying times.

Not just an abundance of nourishing and tasty food but a lasting feeling of being cared about by a community of friends.

-- Betsey Neville, Church Member

"Thank you all for the wonderful reception you prepared for Bob's Celebration of Life. The food was wonderful--and so much of it! I really feel the love and support of the congregation as I deal with Bob's loss."

-- Linda Williams, church member

Saying Goodbye to Beloved Members

Submitted by Lea Smith

We remember with love our members who died.

George Duley

Lois Brown

Eleanor Colby

Bob Williams

Dick Burnside

Jean Reynolds

Mary Sorenson

In the past year, we started offering Community Grief Circles following the death of a member. The Circle does not replace a Memorial Service, but is an opportunity to gather very soon after the death to be together, grieve together, and share stories together of the loss to our faith community.

Memorial Services were held for several members, both public services and private interment of ashes in the columbarium in the Memorial Garden behind the church. At the request of the family, plaques memorializing members may be placed on the Memorial Garden wall behind the church.

Caregivers Support Group

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

One Sunday evening each month, a small group of people caring for a spouse, parent, or other family member met on Zoom to share their stories and support one another. Zoom allowed the group to include friends of group members who were also caregivers, which connected us across at least a few state lines.

Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs)

Our team of Pastoral Care Associates are selected and trained by our ministers to provide a listening ear to their fellow congregants. 2022-23 PCAs were Roger Ballou, Janet Kelley-Vail, Ann West, Nicole Herbst, along with Intern Ministers Jeff Beland and Dan Frye.



Caring Network Memorial Receptions

Submitted by Renee West, Reception Team Leader

Our Caring Network Memorial Reception Team creates a space of care, comfort, and sustenance for attendees of memorial services at our church. It is truly a pleasure to offer this gift to our congregants and their loved ones. The receptions this year boasted hot and cold drinks, and delicious home-baked treats and made by fellow congregants. These offerings of loving care were made possible by 29 wonderful volunteers who, working in teams:

- set up tables and filled them with the goodies, tablecloths and flowers,
- helped make sure everyone's needs were met during the event; and
- helped clean up afterwards so that Fellowship Hall was ready for the next day's events.

Many thanks to all who helped in offering this service this year!



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Nominating Committee

Submitted by Ann Hoey, Committee Chair

The Nominating Committee is charged to recruit and nominate candidates for open positions on the Board of Trustees and the Investment Committee as well as the positions of Treasurer, Assistant Treasurers, Moderator, Clerk and Custodian of Investments. Last year, Jim Curley was nominated to fill a position on the Board after a Board member resigned mid-year. He was elected at the Annual Meeting. The committee nominated the candidates who were elected at the Annual Meeting already serving as Treasurer (Karen Mayo), Assistant Treasurers (Lorraine Ellis and Ann West), Moderator (Barbara Keshen), Clerk (Sara McNeil) and Custodian of Investments (Jack Wakelin.)



Finance Committee

Submitted by Karen Mayo, Jack Wakelin, and Lea Smith

The Finance Committee safeguards church finances and helps to determine how best to use them; we educate the congregation on how resources are being used.

Committee members Karen Mayo, Jack Wakelin and Lee Leppanen, along with ex officio staff members Lea Smith and Michael Leuchtenberger, continued the work of implementing our first annual Capital Budget. The committee held forums prior to the Annual Meeting to answer member questions about the budget, and a proposed bylaw amendment to establish a Capital Reserve Fund. The bylaw passed, and the Capital Budget was approved for Church Year 2023-24.

The Finance Committee negotiated a Gift Agreement with the Unitarian Benevolent Association, which was signed in October 2022. The UBA funds (over \$150,000) were then transferred to a designated fund in our Schwab Investments.

OPERATING BUDGET RESULTS

Submitted by Lea Smith, Director of Membership & Administration

2022-23 Total Operating Expenses | \$505,738

2022-23 Total Operating Income | \$498,134

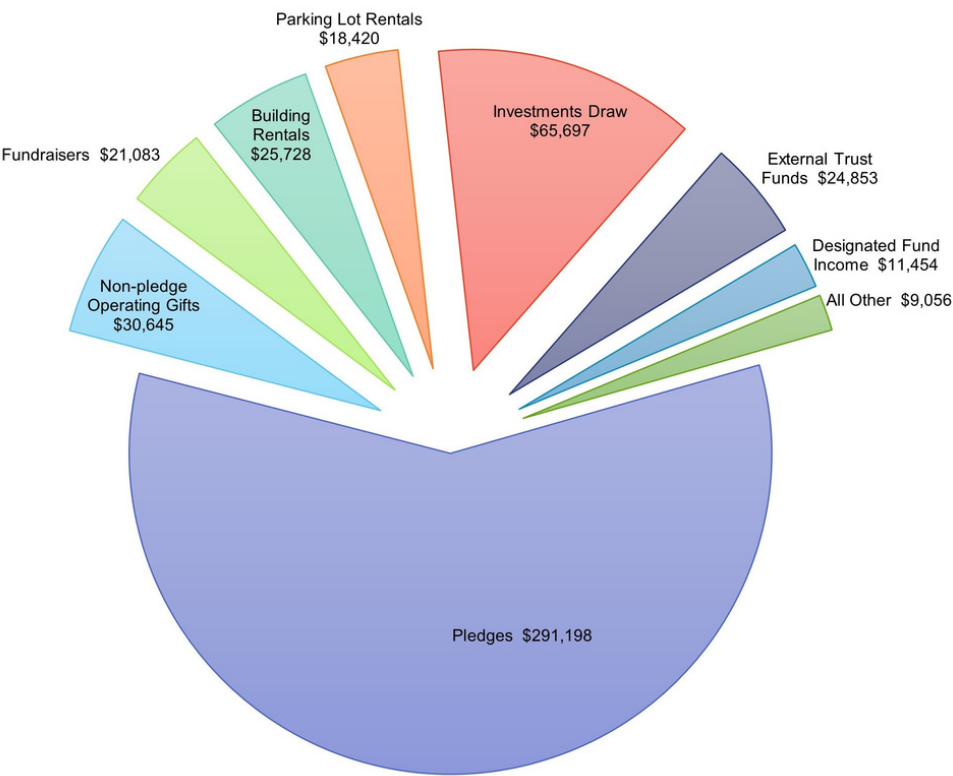
Our church ended the year with an operating shortfall of (\$7,607.) The church spent an additional \$5,628 on capital expenses, and transferred \$3,000 to Sabbatical and Audit Funds to save for future expenses. Taking into account this activity, the total shortfall was (\$16,232.) The congregation had approved a deficit budget of about (\$37,000) so keeping the shortfall to just (\$16,232) is a remarkable success.

As planned, we used designated funds to offset some of the shortfall, including:

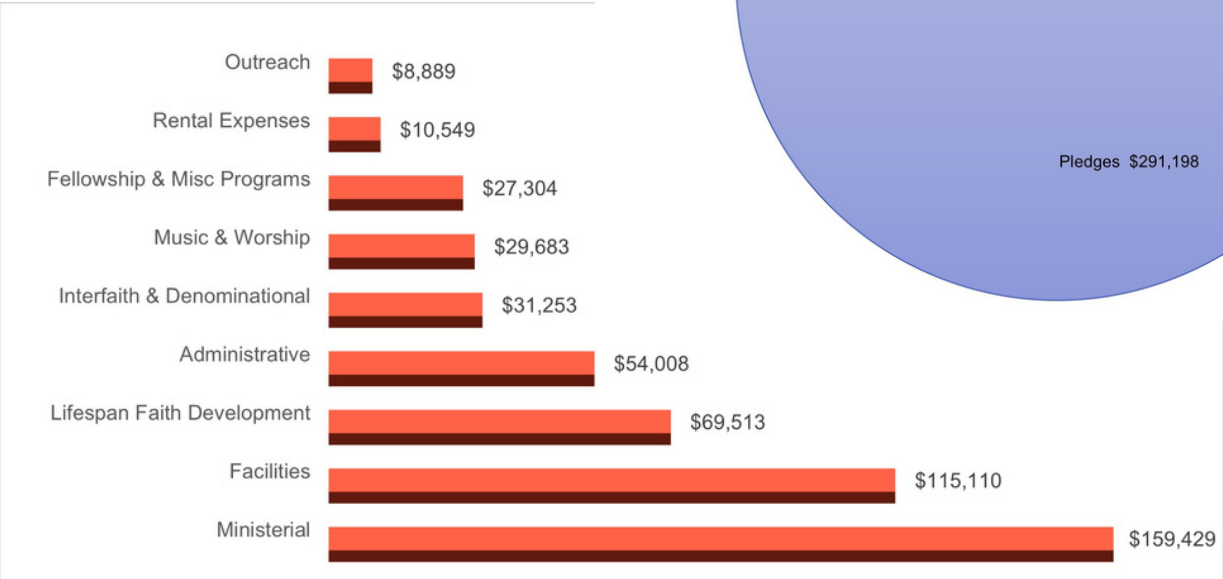
- \$8000 from the Sabbatical Fund to cover staff wages during Michael’s sabbatical, and
- \$5000 from the Intern Minister Fund to cover professional development expenses for our Intern Ministers.

The remainder of the shortfall was covered by reallocation of the 2020-21 investment draw to 2022-23, per vote of the congregation at Annual Meeting 2022. This reallocation was well below the \$26,922 planned, which allowed the Operating Reserve Fund to grow to support future operations. As of July 31, 2023, the balance of the Operating Reserve Fund was \$33,713.

2022-23 SOURCES OF OPERATING INCOME



2022-23 EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



Operations Leadership Team

Submitted by Lea Smith, OLT Secretary

During Michael's sabbatical, the Operations Leadership Team (OLT) acted as a Sabbatical Leadership Team to support the staff and congregation with creative ideas while filling in for Michael. The regular Operations Leadership Team that has four-year terms (appointed by Michael) included Franz Vail, Jennifer Star, Renee West, Chris Soule, Cathy Menard, Belinda Nerl, Betsy Black, and Jeff Corcoran. They were joined by two additional members, BJ Entwisle and Janet Kibbee for the sabbatical period. Michael, Lyn, and Lea are also ex-officio members of the OLT.

Accomplishments:

- Approved Operations Reserve Fund policy and procedures
- Approved updated Building and Grounds Use Policy and rental rates, as proposed by an ad hoc Building Use Committee led by Office Administrator Heidi Page
- Offered Leadership Development workshops in October 2022 and April 2023
- Reviewed and updated charters for many committees to ensure they are serving our church mission and goals
- Brainstormed ideas for leadership succession in committees
- Approved a 5 year parking lease with Concord Ortho, as negotiated by OLT members Jeff Corcoran and Lea Smith
- Approved the creation of an Accessibility Fund to improve access for people with a variety of abilities, and designated that the Christmas Eve collection in 2022 would go to this fund
- Approved the Unitarian Benevolent Spending Policy as proposed by the Finance Team
- Reviewed and endorsed the 2023-24 operating and capital budgets proposed by the Executive for vote at Annual Meeting
- Reviewed and endorsed a bylaws amendment to create a Capital Reserve Fund as proposed by the Finance Team
- Made plans to implement a new Policy for Safely Including Sex Offenders

We have a broad circle of effective leaders who have the resources to complete their work in service to our mission.



Lifespan Faith Development Leadership Team

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

Karen Cox, Janet Kibbee, Laura Messenger, Bianca Rivera-Berry, and Jenn Star worked with Lyn and Michael, with a special focus on serving families. Low attendance for children's programs led them to focus on creating opportunities for the small handful of new families with young children to deepen their connection to the church. "Pancakes, Play, and Planting Peace" grew out of these meetings. (see page 21 for a description.)

Pandemic Policy Team (PPT)

On March 20, 2023 after three years of COVID, we dropped our COVID restrictions! We remain mask friendly, and highly recommend up-to-date vaccinations, requiring them for our staff.

Thanks to Jeff Fetter, BJ Entwisle, Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger, Rev. Lyn Marshall, Belinda Nerl, Jim Schlosser, and Lea Smith for serving on the PPT with care for three years.

FUNDRAISING AND FUN-RAISING

Plant & Yard Sale

Submitted by Renee West

The church had another successful Plant and Yard Sale this year! Jim Downie, who leads the plant portion, and Renee West, who leads the yard sale portion, were able to gather a wide assortment of greens and other goodies for the event held May 20th. We promoted this widely throughout the Concord community, and we were happily surprised at the number of folks who ooh'ed over the veggies and flowers and aah'ed over the assortment of gadgets on offer. The Plant and Yard Sale takes a lot of work to put on, and so we are extremely grateful to the 27 individuals who helped:

- by selecting and setting out the plants to be sold
- by placing the amazing bevy of donated items onto tables in a surprisingly organized fashion
- by serving as cashiers.

Thanks to those volunteers and to those who donated pretty perennials and/or sundry items from your homes. With delicious bread donated by Bob Gabrielli, we raised a net total of \$4,548.62 (an increase of over \$1000 from last year!)



Goods and Services Auction

Under the leadership of Michael Leuchtenberger, Lorraine Ellis, and Betsy Kennedy, our Annual Auction was held on June 11, 2023 following the Spring Picnic, featuring fun games for all ages and scrumptious desserts. About 50 winning bidders purchased homemade dinners, pizza parties, financial coaching, childcare, gardening help, handmade knitted items, donated goods and gift certificates from local businesses, and much more. The net income was over \$11,000!



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Second Hour Adult Learning, Service, and Practice

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

During Michael's sabbatical months, we continued to offer facilitated conversations and contemplative practice options on the second and third Sundays after worship. When Michael returned, we experimented with a new offering, The Idea Gym, which encouraged people to discuss and debate a timely topic related to our worship. We also added a third track: a TED talk and discussion.

Covenant Groups & Soul Matters Circle

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

While some covenant groups have found Zoom to be a useful way to gather, most groups returned to either a hybrid model or fully in-person gatherings. Some of the groups have met for a decade or more, with a composition that changes as some members leave and others join. A Soul Matters circle that started as a pilot group continued to meet, exploring the monthly themes with spiritual exercises to complete individually and then discuss as a group.



Faith Development for Children

With families returning or joining us since the pandemic calmed, we were delighted to announce the return of the Children's Village, for children ages 5-12ish. The Village opened after children were sung out following the Time for All Ages in worship, roughly 10:20, and gave kids a chance to engage in more active community building with their peers. Kids built their own structures with a variety of materials, from sticks and silicone connectors to cardboard boxes to Legos. Adult leaders helped them think through cooperation, resource sharing, and what it takes to create a community where each person feels valued and important.

After the service three Sundays per month we offered:

- Exploring Spirit, ages 5-ish to 11-ish
- Building Bridges, ages 12-ish to adult

Breaking bread together allows us to connect and learn from one another across generations.

Community Luncheons

With COVID finally abating, family-style Community Luncheons resumed with a goal to offer them twice per month. When luncheon hosts weren't available, we experimented with Bring Your Own Lunch. The goal of these luncheons is to make everyone feel welcomed and treated with kindness and care; efficiency, cleanliness, and minimizing chaos are secondary. New hosts are always welcome!

Tuesday's Welcome Table

Upon return from his sabbatical in March, Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger launched Tuesday's Welcome Table, a vegan meal he prepared weekly with help from Rev. Lyn Marshall and occasional volunteers. Drawing around 30 people weekly, the Welcome Table is popular with newcomers and long-timers alike.

Games and Chocolate

Folks of all ages gather on the first Friday of the month for board games and yummy treats!

Seder Supper

CJ and Karen Landsman hosted this long-time UU adaptation of a Jewish holiday, a dinner for all ages featuring traditional Seder foods such as brisket and matzoh. For some, it is a meaningful tradition from their Jewish upbringing, and for others it's the opportunity to learn about the traditions of another religion.





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Worship

During the sabbatical of Rev. Michael Leuchtenberger, Rev. Lyn Marshall led a team of Sabbatical Worship Coordinators (WCs.) These members of the Worship Associates team organized one month of worship services during the sabbatical period from September 2022 to February 2023. Betsy Black, Kay Read, Linda Williams, Jeff Beland, Dan Frye, Suzanne Rude, and Bevan Tulk were the WCs.

The monthly themes from Soul Matters, a UU subscription-based resource library, informed topics for worship and Covenant Groups. The themes were:

September 2022: Belonging
October 2022 Courage
November 2022 Change
December 2022 Wonder
January 2023 Finding Our Center
February 2023 Love
March 2023 Vulnerability
April 2023 Resistance
May 2023 Creativity
June 2023 Delight

Taizé Services

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

It was another marker of improving Covid statistics that our monthly Taizé-style services resumed with live musicians. While Michael was on sabbatical, Calvin Herst served as the music director and Rev. Lyn Marshall led the services. Craig Whitson on guitar, Lorraine Ellis on recorder, Charles Hillen on flute, and some cameo appearances by other musicians made these contemplative evening services lovely, peaceful, and soul-satisfying.



2023 Summer Services

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

Summer services provided in-person and livestreamed services that attracted a smaller crowd, but they provided continuity for those who love and want weekly worship, a place for UUs visiting the area on vacation to experience a different UU congregation, and an opportunity for a small but steady stream of newcomers to get to know us.

June 18 - Rev. Lyn Marshall, The Blessing of Animals

June 25 - Rev. Jim Curley, Two Faith Views of Paris: The Hunchback Story Explored

July 2 - Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti, Ever Willing: Becoming the People Our World Needs (2023 UUA General Assembly Sunday Worship)

July 9 - Barbara Keshen, Why I Am a Member of the NAACP

July 16 - Wholly Rollers, Songs Of Life (& Death)!

July 23 - Rev. Jim Curley, Tool Time

July 30 - Rik Yeames, Solar Eclipses: A Spiritual Perspective

August 6 - Renee West, How Our Humanity is Saved through Empathy

August 13 - Rev. Lyn Marshall, The Heart & Soul of ADHD

August 20 - Rev. Lyn Marshall, Dopamine and the Devil

August 27 - Kay Read, To Think Within or Without the Box

September 3 - Rev. Denise Tracy, The Theology of the Wizard of Oz



Christmas Eve Services

Submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

Christmas Eve services saw the return of the no-rehearsal pageant with shepherds, sheep, angels, wise men, and of course the Holy Family! Due to a shortage of infants in the congregation, the part of Jesus was played by a doll on loan from one of the angels.



Earth Centered Spirituality Group

Submitted by Chris Faella, Co-leader, with additions by Lea Smith

The Earth Centered Spirituality Group offers people the opportunity to gather together at the turning points of the seasons and celestial events, to connect with one another and divinity in nature. Through these connections, we find communion with each other, the Earth and the divine. All with a desire for respectful harmonious exploration are welcome.

Our biggest event of the year, the Winter Solstice/Yule Ritual, returned in 2022 after being canceled in 2020 and 2021 for COVID-related reasons. Intern Minister Jeff Beland provided assistance to help fill in while Michael was on sabbatical.



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Monday Mindfulness

Submitted by Craig Whitson, Co-founder

The intention of the Monday Mindfulness Group: Grounded in Mindfulness Practices taught in the course Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, we come together in community with the intention to cultivate open heartedness in a safe, trusting environment and to be friends with and in the present moment. We encourage you to mindfully experience the wide variety of practices that our member facilitators share.

In the 2022-2023 church year we gathered for mindfulness practice and meditation sessions on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month.

- Second Mondays were reserved for one-off sessions led by our volunteer lay facilitators
- Fourth Mondays were dedicated to two book studies: Jack Kornfield's "Buddhism for Beginners" and "Full Catastrophe Living" by Jon Kabat-Zinn. In both cases the group listened to the audiobook of these teachings as part of each session and allowed time also for discussion and meditation.

First and third Mondays were dedicated to Yoga practice. The Fall Yoga program included a series of classes dedicated to the 9 attitudes of mindfulness as taught by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program.

To me, our group is a UU version of a Buddhist Sangha - a refuge of fellow mindfulness practitioners. Together we learn and share the triumphs and challenges of our practice and our lives. It has been a transformative experience for me.


-- Craig Whitson

All We Can Save Covenant Group

Submitted by Alice DonnaSelva, organizer

This group initially formed in fall 2022 to read the book *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*. We read the book together, and 3 times a month explored what we could do alone and together and with our fellow church members to save all that can be saved of the interdependent web of life. The group was initially open to all, and eventually evolved into a closed group similar to a Covenant Group.

In April 2023, we created a church service entitled "Saving All We Can, Together," to share our new found energy and actions for addressing climate change, and the joy and hope we found in the community of our book circle, in hope of inspiring others in the church. We shared a plant rich (nearly vegan) meal with the church community and shared some of our learnings at our tables as we shared a meal.



*We mark this time apart from ordinary.
Let us be as the determined seed,
brought to the light through the courage
we hold, tended by commitments to one
another and our planet as we boldly grow
the solvers and solutions that save all we
can save together.*

-- chalice lighting words for the All We Can Save group, composed by Judy Maloney

Date with Death Club

Intern Minister Jeff Beland led Date with Death Club, a secular/non-dogmatic exploration of mortality in community, including philosophical/spiritual and informational/logistical content. Offered on various Saturdays over a period of several months, the goal of the Date with Death Club was to cultivate the possibility of living a more awake life by facing the reality of our death.



Stewardship Team

Submitted by BJ Entwisle, Committee Chair

To help the church move towards a balanced budget in 2023-24, in the spring of 2023 the Stewardship Team reached out to almost everyone in the congregation to ask them to try to increase their pledge. We felt we were including everyone as a valuable member and that pledging is a daily practice of values.

It was heartwarming and good for group morale to have so many people, regardless of their pledging ability, thank us sincerely for doing this important work.

--- BJ Entwisle, Stewardship Chair



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Youth Group

submitted by Rev. Lyn Marshall

This year saw a large turnover in the makeup of our youth group. Many of the youth who bonded during the Covid years were now juniors and seniors, busy with work, college applications, and other activities. Enter the graduates of the 2022 Our Whole Lives program! Our roster skewed towards the younger end with mostly 8th and 9th graders attending. Krystina Olsen joined the team to fill in for Michael during his sabbatical.

We continued some of our favorite traditions, including a night hike in Winant Park, a Cupcake Bake-Off, and the Youth Group Olympics.

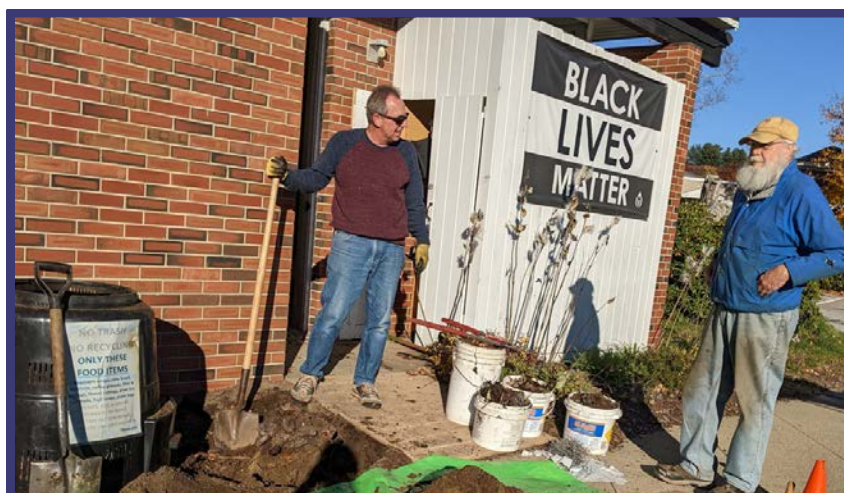
The group put on an excellent service in May 2023 on the topic of food waste, which they had learned about through research, including visits to local grocery stores and restaurants.





Pancakes, Play, & Planting Peace

New in the spring of 2023, families gathered on the first Saturday mornings of the month for a pancake breakfast, games, and a service project designed to be fun for all ages. At our inaugural PPPP session in March, we planted flower seeds for our chancel garden (source of our summer Sunday flower arrangements) and veggie seeds to provide food for our community meals. We also baked cookies to take to the Homeless Resource Center to share with our unhoused neighbors, and played with Legos while the cookies baked.



Composting

Submitted by Belinda Nerl, Coordinator

We are living by and following UU Principle #7 Respect for the interdependent web, as we compost our waste into usable soil.

Two black composting bins situated on the front of the building off of the Fellowship Hall are for vegetable and food waste, like apple cores, orange peels and leftover fruits or vegetables from social time or other functions. They are also available to compost waste that congregants create at home. We have created about ten 5-gallon buckets of usable rich soil from everyone's efforts to date. Because animals that like our compost were making a big mess by digging it all onto the sidewalk to find their favorite items, a wire mesh was added on the bottom of each bin. To do that, two stumps from yew bushes had to be removed. Loren Hill, John Nerl and Belinda Nerl worked on this project in October 2022.





UU CHURCH
OF CONCORD

**We are grounded in
our Unitarian
Universalist Faith
tradition and pass
those values to the
next generation.**

Unitarian Benevolent Fund

Submitted by Lea Smith

The Unitarian Benevolent Association (UBA) was established in 1920, in keeping with the Unitarian value of assisting people in need. It operated as an independent legal entity for over 100 years until its members voted to dissolve the UBA in 2021. The assets of about \$160,000 were given to the church in early 2023, so future generations can carry on this legacy of service. The funds have been set aside in a Board designated Unitarian Benevolent Fund (UBF), and will be used “to provide support to the poor, and indigent women and children in the Concord community, and those UUCU members who are housebound due to age, illness or disability,” through disbursements to outside organizations and through support of church programs in these areas.



Investments Committee

Submitted by Rob Fleischman, Investments Committee Chair, and Karen Mayo, Committee Member and Church Treasurer

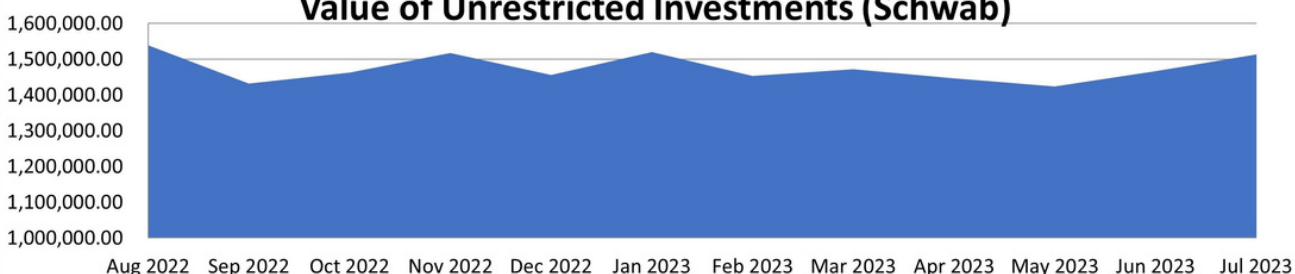
We are careful stewards of the church's assets and invest it responsibly mirroring the values of our faith community.

Our investment balance, exclusive of the new Unitarian Benevolent Fund, decreased by \$102,937, from \$1,616,928 on July 31, 2022 to \$1,513,991 on July 31, 2023. Of that decrease, about \$60,000 was used to pay off the Greener Building Project loan. The fund slightly rebounded with the rest of the stock market this year, but we withdrew more than we deposited to the fund, between quarterly operating draws, withdrawals from the operating reserve and other designated funds, and fees.

The new Unitarian Benevolent Fund (UBF) at Schwab was created in early spring 2023. As of July 31, 2023, the UBF had a balance of 174,227.62.

The Memorial Garden fund had unrealized gains of just under \$500, leaving an ending balance of \$32,952.

Value of Unrestricted Investments (Schwab)



Building Maintenance Committee

Submitted by Franz Vail, Committee Chair

Our church building has served several generations of UUs since being built in 1959, and it needs loving maintenance to continue serving future generations.

The Building Maintenance Committee (BMC) took on a number of projects:

- Striping and sweeping the parking lot
- Concrete repairs to the front sidewalks
- Cleaning gutters and debris from the roof
- Replacing the glass top on the Chancel table
- Making accessibility improvements at the Chapel/Emerson School entrance

Projects undertaken in partnership with Robert Baker, Director of Facilities and Technology:

- Repair the kitchen sink grease trap
- Re-attach downspouts at the Sanctuary that had become disconnected
- Work with a new contractor to correct heating and ventilation control issues

The BMC worked with consultants to plan future work, including:

- An architectural consultation for accessibility improvements
- A contractor review of the "Trexler" structural report to assess and prioritize the recommendations

The BMC put forward three capital improvement projects for consideration:

- Accessibility projects, in three phases; 1) Emerson Entrance (complete), 2) Sanctuary ramp design and 3) construction of the Sanctuary ramp and related work
- Sewer drain assessment and repair, estimated \$25,000, which we hope to do in fiscal year 2024-2025
- Structural investigations and repairs to correct deficiencies identified in the Trexler Report – unknown cost, at some time in the future.

Board of Trustees

Submitted by Kelly Mahony, Board Chair

The board is tasked with monitoring the performance of the Senior Minister and the finances of the church to ensure there is a stable foundation to build on. The board is also tasked with discerning the needs and wants of the congregation through linkage with the congregation and to develop any new policies or ends or revise existing ends statements if needed.

We are currently in the second year of gathering quotes from all the moral owners of the church in our work on the "Powerful Question" that will help us define the needs and wants of the congregation at this time. Stay tuned for more on that.





UU CHURCH
OF CONCORD

**We are visible
leaders in the
greater Concord
area as we live our
Unitarian
Universalist values.**

NH Council of Churches

Submitted by Rev. Suzanne Rude, UU Representative

In the 2022-2023 church year, Rev. Allison Palmer (UU Church of Nashua) and Rev. Suzanne Rude (UU Church of Concord), served as President and Vice-President of the Council representing the UUA on the Council. The Council received a \$10,000 grant to update its mission, vision, and values and worked with a consultant on that project throughout this year. The Council showed leadership in our state by collecting about 100 clergy signatures for an open letter in support of LGBTQ students in our schools, as well as by supporting a successful inaugural Guns to Gardens event, which made it possible for gun owners in our state to relinquish their unwanted firearms to be transformed into garden tools. The Council also worked on racial equity issues in our state through various programs.

***Working with clergy from
different denominations from
throughout our state on
LGBTQ, racial equity and gun
violence issues has been both
challenging and rewarding! I
have been especially proud of
our successes this year.***

-- Suzanne Rude



Building Use

Submitted by Lea Smith

The sixth principle of UUism affirms “the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.” As a church that feels a responsibility to our community, and wishes to be an influence in our community’s religious, ethical, and cultural life, we encourage use of our church building and grounds by groups that are compatible with the church’s mission and vision.

The church dedicated its building as a Peace Site in 1988. Over time, this program has evolved into the current “Community Partners” program. Concord UUs are often involved in non-church organizations or projects that have missions that reflect one or more church Ends statements. Church members and pledging friends looking for space for a group that is in alignment with our Ends statements, may apply to use the church building for free or a reduced rate. Community Partners that were approved or used our space this year included:

- Human Rights Working Group and Climate Action Working Group of the Kent Street Coalition
- Piece of Pizza for Peace, part of NH Peace Action
- Open Democracy, March 2023 event “How Getting Big Money out of Politics can Bring Americans Together”
- Concord Coalition to End Homelessness monthly Board meetings

We also offer space for free or at a reduced rate for denominational and interfaith events.

Voices United for Ukraine

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the outpouring of support for Ukrainians was extraordinary across the country. On April 1, 2023, church member Craig Whitson, along with friend of the church Val Blachly, coordinated a wildly successful fundraiser, sending over \$8000 to the Sunflower Network, a 501c3 organization assisting people in Ukraine.

"Voices United for Ukraine" featured a dinner of authentic Ukrainian food prepared and served in Fellowship Hall by a group of local Ukrainians who kindly donated their culinary skills. During dinner a duo of teen Ukrainian brothers entertained us with their accordion music. After dinner, a concert in the Sanctuary featured:

- Northern Lights - an all-woman acapella group under the direction of Peggo Hodes
- Andriy Zharkov - a folk singer from Ukraine who also spoke of his experience of emigrating in wartime
- The Wholly Rollers - our church's own quintet of "men in strange hats" playing selections from their gospel, roots, and bluegrass songbook
- The Hot Skillet Club - a trio including event originator, Val Blachly, playing their brand of swing tunes with tight harmonies.





UU CHURCH
OF CONCORD

Our outreach ministries have a noticeable impact in the larger community.

UU Friends of Refugees

Since forming in 2008, the UU Church of Concord has formed 16 circles of support for newly arrived refugees from a variety of countries. Bevan Tulk chaired the UU Friends of Refugees Committee in 2022-23. We explored how to provide support independent of a refugee resettlement agency with which we had previously worked. We partnered with Temple Beth Jacob and with South Congregational Church in supporting two families. These interfaith and intercultural connections help us increase understanding and friendships across lines of religion and ethnicity.



Friendly Kitchen Cooks

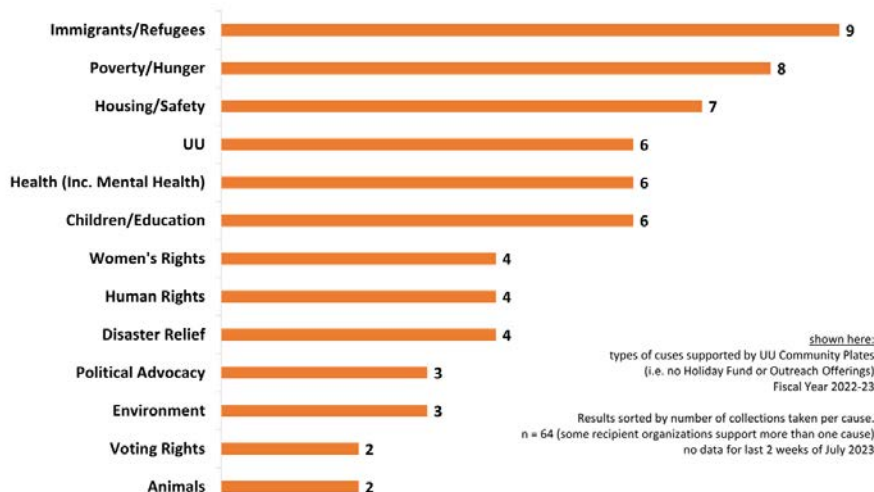
Submitted by Fran Philippe, Coordinator

A UU team of cooks prepare and serve the first Wednesday of the month dinner to the guests at the Friendly Kitchen, Concord's only "soup kitchen." Because we have so many volunteers, both church members and friends, each person usually only has to cook four or five times during the year. This year's team included Kath Butcher, Beth Corcoran, Kathy Everest, Beth Gabrielli, Pat and Manfred Hoertdoerfer, Bob Holleman, Virginia Joslyn, Carrie Keeley, Aimee Monterio, Pam Mosca, Fran Philippe, Paulette Tanguay and Kits Tunney, with Kath, Bob and Fran planning and coordinating the meals. Some of us have been doing this for many of the church's 40 years of participation, fulfilling this need to this special population, feeling both the joy of working together and the satisfaction of the service we provide with love.

For the past few years, I have had the pleasure of being a part of the UU kitchen crew at the Friendly Kitchen. With the camaraderie of the kitchen team, combined with the feeling of doing something so worthwhile for our community it has been a very rewarding experience.

-- Virginia Joslyn, cook

What sorts of causes did the Community Plates support?



"Thank you so much for your generous donation to the Hero Pups! Support from our community and amazing people like you is what keeps the program running.... Your contribution will go directly towards the pups' care, such as food, supplies, and veterinary costs."

Organization	Collection Amount	Date
Fund for Global Human Rights	\$ 1,233.55	2/12/2023
NAMI NH	\$ 786.22	6/11/2023
UUSC Emergency Response Fund for Haiti	\$ 760.09	11/13/2022
Mercy Chefs	\$ 746.94	10/2/2022
Friendly Kitchen	\$ 745.35	11/27/2022
UU the Vote	\$ 708.12	9/25/2022
Doctors Without Borders	\$ 694.08	3/5/12/2023
Immigrant & Refugee Support Group	\$ 668.83	12/18/2022
CATCH	\$ 658.25	5/28/2023
CASA of NH	\$ 639.41	5/7/2023
Live & Let Live Farm	\$ 638.00	6/18/2023
Families in Transition	\$ 599.97	11/06/2022
Reproductive Freedom Fund of NH	\$ 596.38	10/23/2022
UUA Disaster Relief Fund	\$ 596.97	1/22/2023
CROP Hunger Walk	\$ 595.94	9/18/2022
Overcomers Refugee Service	\$ 595.09	1/29/2023
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) NH	\$ 593.59	1/15/2023
Concord Multicultural Festival	\$ 589.00	9/11/2022
CCEH back-to-school program	\$ 582.38	08/21/2022
Sycamore Garden	\$ 564.00	3/19/2023
Women's Club of Concord	\$ 560.00	5/21/2023
Asylum Seekers Support Fund	\$ 557.50	10/16/2022
Friends of Forgotten Children	\$ 541.35	4/9/2023
Merrimack County Daycare Service	\$ 521.34	2/5/2023
Liberty House	\$ 513.43	7/9/2023
Overcomers Refugee Service-Project STORY	\$ 506.00	7/16/2023
Conservation Law Foundation	\$ 501.41	2/19/2023
Sunset Hill Educational Institute	\$ 484.38	3/12/2023
New Hampshire Women's Foundation	\$ 422.22	3/26/2023
NH Food Bank	\$ 405.53	12/25/22
NH Sierra Club	\$ 383.41	1/1/2023
Women for Women International	\$ 298.00	7/2/2023
603 Forward	\$ 295.97	08/07/2022
Hero Pups	\$ 259.12	08/14/2022
Granite State Progress for Gun Sense NH	\$ 256.00	9/4/2022
		6/25/2023

Community Plate Committee

Submitted by Deb Bruss, Chair

The Community Plate Committee never tires of discovering and sharing information about non-profits and causes that need our support, whether these are local or worldwide.

In addition to Community Plates listed to the left, some plates are considered "Outreach Offerings," supporting causes from within our church community, including UU Friends of Refugees, our annual pledges of \$1000 each to Family Promise of Greater Concord and the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, and our UU Action NH dues. Unlike many congregations, only one plate per year is collected for our church's general operating budget.

We continue to meet on Zoom since our members' schedules don't mesh with in-person meetings. Thank you to our most recent member, Faithe Miller Lakowicz, for tracking and analyzing our data.



Family Promise

Submitted by Pam Mosca, UU Family Promise coordinator

Working with Family Promise of Greater Concord, our church provided hospitality and warmth using a portion of our building as a temporary home for families experiencing homelessness. Our local Family Promise agency supports low income families and families experiencing homelessness achieve sustainable independence through a community based response. Family Promise focuses on three areas of support: homeless prevention, emergency shelter and graduate support services for families once they've found housing. We are involved with the emergency shelter component by being one of 13 local interfaith congregations who provide 4 weeks of emergency shelter in our church throughout the year.

In 2022-23 we hosted six families while they were in the program on their way to finding sustainable housing. We appreciate our church volunteers' kind hearts and time as they provide meals, purchase snacks and host at our church. We hosted two to three families for a week in each of the months: October, December, February and April.

We turned Fellowship Hall into a warm "living space" with a snack table, and created a fun play space using the rug from the Rainbow Room with blocks and toys for young children on the floor. On nearby tables we put games, markers, playdough, larger puzzles for older children and adult coloring pages to encourage children to interact with their families and/or our evening hosts. Our volunteers turned the Kent/Thomas rooms into bedrooms by making beds and adding table lamps as well as turning the back of Fellowship Hall into a bedroom for the weeks when we hosted three families. Hosts made and served dinner the seven evenings of the weeks families were with us. We provided breakfast items, coffee and lunch fixings for families each day.

One father said it meant so much to him to not be judged & was so grateful at the end of his day to be in a safe place to eat & rest with caring folks.

-- Kits Tunney, volunteer host

Our outreach ministries have a noticeable impact in the larger community.

Many small acts of kindness by our volunteers made a difference for families in their times of transition:

- One week, Michael helped a teenage boy find the cords and a screen so he could play his favorite video games.
- One late afternoon a child arrived asking, "Can we make another big puzzle because you know I'm good at it?"
- During dinner one evening, members from two separate families asked the hosts to let the cook know how much they enjoyed the stew and to give them a big thank you.
- Two brothers, a parent and a host got creative with two colors of homemade playdough, smooth stones and toothpicks. When this family secured an apartment, the boys were all smiles when we gave them the playdough to take. One boy said, "Mom, I can put this in my room!"
- Many of the family members opened up to our volunteers who responded with compassion and sensitivity while we grew in our ability to see life from others' perspectives.

We are full and active participants in the work of both the Greater Concord Faith Community and the larger Unitarian Universalist community.

UUA Annual Program Fund

Our church's 2022-23 contribution to the Unitarian Universalist Association was the full requested amount of \$29,923, earning us the status of Honor Congregation for the first time since 2001!

Greater Concord Interfaith Council

Submitted by Rev. Suzanne Rude,
UU Representative

The Greater Concord Interfaith Council raised a total of \$12,632 in our Fall 2022 CROP Walk event to benefit local food pantries and international development programs with our own church's community plate contributing to this successful faith community effort. The Council's Thanksgiving program was chaired by Reverend Suzanne Rude and featured music by the Concord UU "house band", the Wholly Rollers, and remarks on gratitude by UU Linda Williams, the Council Secretary. The Lenten Lunch sessions in the Spring included presentations on such religious and community topics as organ donations; a presentation by Suzanne on interfaith ministry; and a Seder meal led by Rabbi Robin Nafshi.

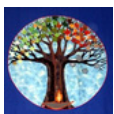


Internship Committee

Submitted by Suzanne Rude, Co-chair,
with Betsy Black

A committee of five church members (Suzanne, Betsy, Craig Whitson, Fran Philippe, Belinda Nerl) met monthly with our two UU intern ministers (Dan Frye and Jeff Beland) during this, the second year of their internships. We reflected on their experiences in their ministerial formation and shared our observations about their challenges, successes and progress. In addition to offering them personal feedback throughout the year, we ultimately wrote evaluations on their internship performance and their learning agreement outcomes to the UUA and to their seminary.





UU CHURCH
OF CONCORD

We work to recognize, understand, and dismantle systems of bias, oppression, and privilege within ourselves, our congregation, our community, and the larger world.

Accessibility

Submitted by Lea Smith

Several groups took on the challenge of understanding the barriers to participation in our congregation for those with physical impairments or invisible disabilities.

Intern Minister Dan Frye organized an Accessibility Awareness and Sensitivity Training Workshop on Saturday, March 18, 2023. Church members and people from the wider community experienced an information-packed day of resource sharing; casual but facilitated conversations about many types of disability; a panel of persons with disabilities with personal stories to share; and two dynamic keynote addresses.

In the summer of 2023, Renee West and Bobbie Herron led a forum to gather ideas for improving accessibility at our picnics. Some ideas that are being implemented include a quiet/cooling room, improved access for those with mobility impairments, and encouraging everyone to offer help or line-cutting to those who need it.

The church created an Accessibility Fund to start saving money towards significant structural improvements. The Building Maintenance Team added a push-button door opener to the Emerson entrance. At Annual Meeting 2023, the congregation approved spending \$9000 (from the Capital Reserve Fund and the Memorial Gift Fund) on an architectural design to make the Sanctuary entrance wheelchair accessible. While this will only cover the design, it is a first step towards construction in a future year.



Matsiko World Orphan Choir

In May 2023, we received a last-minute request from the Matsiko World Orphan Choir to provide housing and meals for a day and night while in Concord. In exchange, they gave a free concert at our church, selling CDs, tee shirts and crafts from the children's home country, providing information about child sponsorships, and accepting donations. The 2023 choir was made up of children from Liberia, West Africa. The concert was joyful, our volunteers provided bountiful food, and having a church full of bubbly children overnight was a treat!



"The Matsiko World Orphan Choir has brought together our world's orphaned and vulnerable children to share their story of turning the pain of loss, hunger, and hopelessness into personal empowerment, an educational scholarship through their nation's university or vocational levels to instill love, joy, hope, and optimism for the future."

--- matsiko.org/world-orphan-choir

“Don’t Look Away!”

The 45,000 Quilt Project

In late fall 2022, we were honored to host “Don’t Look Away!”, the 45,000 Quilt Project, a beautiful work of art that brought together the efforts of over 60 immigrant justice activists and artists from across the US, as well as one artist from Mexico. Its purpose was to show the extent of immigrant detention in our country and work toward more humane solutions. Also on display was a Migrant Teens Incarcerated Art Exhibit.

We hosted an Open House and Panel Discussion on December 17 where we met some of the creators of the quilt and learned a bit about “What is Going On with Immigration in NH?”

Finally, on December 18 we recognized International Migrants Day with a special Worship Service featuring guest speaker Eva Castillo, Director of the NH Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees.

Special thanks to Trudy Mott-Smith and Heidi Page for their extraordinary efforts to bring this educational and inspiring program to us.



MIGRANT TEENS INCARCERATED ART EXHIBIT

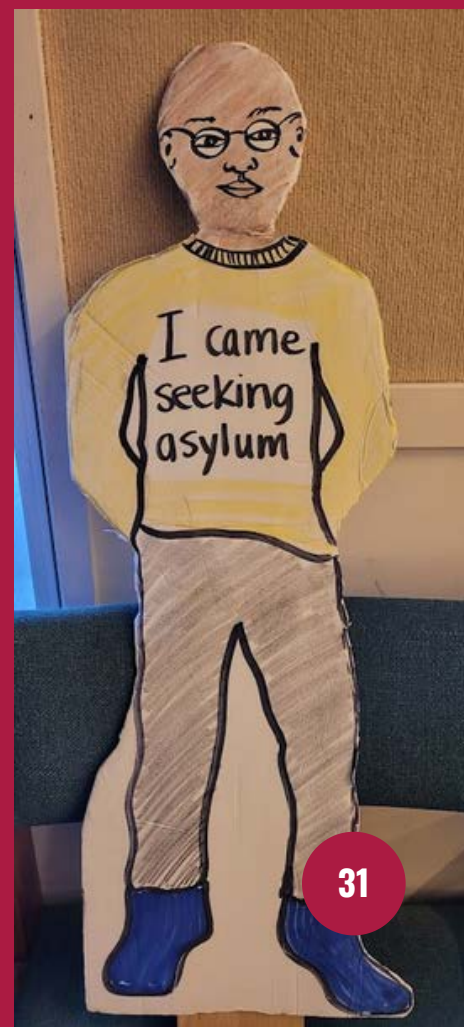
Migrant teens incarcerated were assigned to create artworks that depicted their home cultures, architecture and geography. Only a tiny fraction of the 400 works produced were saved. Those artworks are currently displayed at the Centennial Museum at the University of El Paso.

A traveling version of the show has been created right here in NH using prints from a professional photographer. The art, vibrant and moving, shows these young artists' love for their Central American countries.

 **November 21 – December 19**
Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord
(please use East Entrance)

 **Open Free to the Public** Tuesdays – Fridays from 10 am – 3 pm
Saturdays, 10 am – 2 pm and Mondays by appointment by emailing office@concorduu.org

  **Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord NH**
274 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301 • (603) 224-0291





Special thanks
to the Yearbook Committee:
Lea Smith, Karen Landsman,
Arthoen Wolf, Fran Philippe,
Deb Bruss, and Debbie Farr

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Concord, NH 03301
(603) 224-0291
www.concorduu.org

